DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 848 SO 030 820

TITLE	True Needs True Partners: 1998 Survey Highlights. Museums Serving Schools.
INSTITUTION	Institute of Museum and Library Services, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	14p.; For a related document, see ED 405 185.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute of Museum and Library Services, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20506. Tel: 202-606-8536.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Art Activities; Community Resources; Cultural Centers; *Educational Facilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Enrichment Activities; *Museums; National Surveys; Social Science Research
IDENTIFIERS	*Institutional Responsiveness; *Museum Educators

ABSTRACT

In 1994 the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), a federal grant-making agency joined forces with the Arnot Art Museum and Elmira College, both located in Elmira, New York, to coordinate a survey of museums in the United States for the purpose of collecting specific information about the full range of educational activities that museums offer to the nation's schools. This document is a a highlight of the survey results. A random sample of 600 was drawn from the IMLS institutional database of 11,700. The results, collected over a 3-year period, created a baseline profile of the status of museum education and presented a strong picture of the educational programming museums provide schools. U.S. museums (of all types) are providing more K-12 educational programs than ever before. Museums spend $193 million annually on K-12 programs; 70 percent of museums have at least one full-time paid staff who offers such programming. Collectively, U.S. museums provide nearly 4 million hours of educational programming. Museums report substantial use of school curriculum standards in shaping educational programs for a variety of school subjects. Museums offer a wide range of learning activities, such as teacher triaging, staff, docent guided tours, and museum staff visits to school classrooms. Museums also provide resource kits, learning trunks, and traveling exhibits to schools. The commitment of museums to education programs for schools is growing. At least 70 percent of the institutions report an increase in the number of students, teachers, and schools served in the last five years. (BT)

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True Needs True Partners

1998 Survey Highlights

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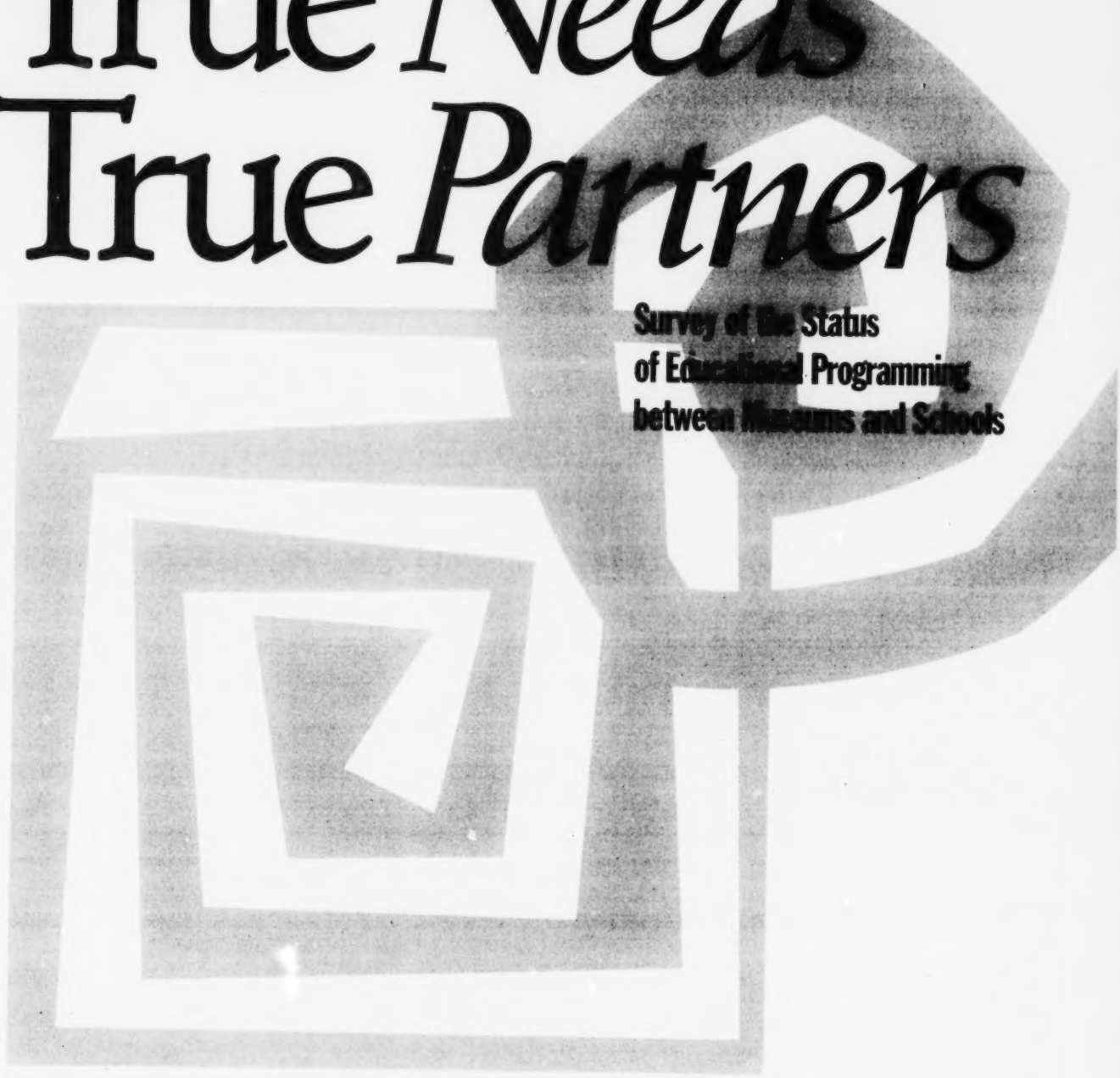
True *Needs* True *Partners*

Survey of the Status of Educational Programming between Museums and Schools



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The Institute of Museum and Library Services is a federal grant-making agency that fosters leadership, innovation and a lifetime of learning through its wide support of museums and libraries. From aquariums and arboretums to planetariums and zoological parks, museums large and small have received assistance from the Institute to strengthen their operations, improve care of collection activities and expand opportunities for professional development. The Institute provides support in many ways, including financial grants, educational materials and informative surveys. In 1994, for example, IMLS began a three-year program to encourage museum-school partnerships, involving 82,000 students, 228 schools and 82 museums. In 1997, IMLS published "True Needs, True Partners," an 80-page book that profiled 15 museum-school partnerships and provided firsthand experiences and recommendations from successful partnerships.

Through a 1996 cooperative agreement, the Institute joined forces with the Arnot Art Museum and Elmira College, both located in Elmira, New York, to coordinate a survey of museums in the United States for the purpose of collecting specific information about the full range of educational activities that museums offer to the nation's schools. The results, collected over a three-year period, created a baseline profile of the status of museum education and formed a strong picture of the educational programming museums provide schools.

The survey sought to **answer questions** such as:

? What are the characteristics of museums that offer educational programming for schools

? What museum resources are devoted to K–12 education

? How are museums working with schools

? What grades are served

? Why do schools use museums as educational partners

? Who decides to partner

? Do museum education programs coordinate with school curricula

? How has museum service to schools changed over the past five years

For the first time, we now have strong **statistical information** that confirms that museums and schools are working together to better educate students at all grade levels. More than ever, education is an acknowledged cornerstone of museum service, and these survey results provide a reliable and valid measurement of the **current status** of museum educational programming for the K–12 school population. We now know:

✓ Museums of all types offer educational programs that serve students in all grades and in all regions of the nation, from urban and inner-city areas to suburban and rural communities.

✓ Cumulatively, museums spend millions of dollars in resources and provide millions of instructional hours.

✓ Museums offer a wide range of learning activities such as pre-service and in-service training for teachers; staff-, docent-

and self-guided museum visits; pre-and post-visit lessons to enrich museum visits; resource kits/learning trunks for classroom loans; and museum staff visits to school classrooms.

✓ Museum education programs support school curriculum standards and learning objectives.

✓ Museums have an increasing commitment to education programs for schools.

✓ The content and unique nature of museum programming influences a school's decision to partner with a museum.

✓ Resources such as staff and budget are useful in predicting the extent of educational programming offered by an individual museum.

✓ Museum/school partnerships require significant support and expertise from both institutions.

Highlights of the Findings

What are the Characteristics of Museums that Offer Educational Programming for Schools?

Of the nearly 10,000 museums in the U.S., 88% report that they provide K–12 educational programming.[1]

All types of museums (art, history, zoo, etc.) in all types of locations (urban, rural, university/college affiliation, etc.) provide educational programming for K–12 school audience. The programming is similar in both range of programs and levels served.

What Museum Resources are Devoted to K–12 Education?

At a minimum, museums in the U.S. spend $193 million annually on K–12 programming.

The typical museum provides between 100 and 223 instructional hours to students each year, with a low estimate of 3.9 million hours collectively for all museums.

Seventy percent of museums with at least one full-time paid staff offer K–12 educational programming.

Understandably, museums with larger staffs are more likely to offer K–12 educational programming. The "typical" museum

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[1] The 88% represents the findings from a follow-up survey to the original survey and more accurately reflects the educational activities within the museum community. In the original survey, the question on whether the museum provided K–12 educational programming was misconstrued by some respondents to mean that they provided educational programming for K–12, inclusive of all grades, with the result that the number responding "yes" was under represented at 67.5%. In the follow-up survey with the question clarified, the percentage was 88%. All other percentages provided here reflect the findings from the original survey. Therefore, the actual level of educational programming between museums and schools is likely higher than these numbers indicate.

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(as defined by those museums responding to the questionnaire) provides two full-time, two part-time and five docents to carry out its educational objectives.

Similarly, museums with higher operating budgets are significantly more likely to have a staff member working with the school to develop K–12 programming. They also offer more types of educational activities.

How are Museums Working with Schools?

The most frequently identified museum education activities are guided field trips. These include staff-guided programs (88.4% of museums reporting); trained volunteer-guided (72.6%) and self-guided (68.8%).

A majority of museums also offer more extensive programs, such as multiple visits by a class to the museum; museum-staff visits to the school; and pre-visit lessons offered to prepare students for a museum visit and to build links with classroom studies.

In smaller numbers, museums are undertaking new types of activities, such as running a museum school (9.1%) or providing traveling exhibits to a school (15.9%).

What Grades are Served?

Grades three to six are the most heavily served by museums, with the fourth grade receiving the highest level of service.

Contrary to the belief that museum programs do not generally serve a secondary school audience, results show that be-

tween 60% and 73% of museums, depending on the grade level, have programs for secondary school students.

An estimated 46% of all museums offer educational programming for every grade level.

Why Do Schools Use Museums as Educational Partners?

Enrichment of general learning, providing informal learning experiences and creating unique learning experiences are considered the aspects of programming with the most impact on a school's decision to use a museum.

Logistically, low to modest cost of participation and the museum's geographic location have the highest impact on a school's decision to use a museum's educational programming.

Who Decides to Partner?

Museum respondents think teachers lead the way in school organizations in influencing the decision to participate in museum educational programs.

Within museums, directors are rated as having the primary responsibility for decisions to offer school programs.

Museum respondents believe that a range of people, within both the museum and the school organization, share in the development of educational content of museum programs, but identify museum educators as having the greatest overall responsibility for initiating and sustaining these programs.

Do Museum Education Programs Coordinate with School Curricula?

Museums report the substantial use of school curriculum standards in shaping educational programs for a given subject; survey results tallied 92% for math, 87% for science, 76% for art and 72% for history.

Museums report a high correlation to school curricula for a host of different types of activities. The highest correlation is for in-service training, resource kits, museum visits with pre-lessons, and museum visits with pre and post-lessons (all 97% or higher).

How Has Museum Service to Schools Changed Over the Past Five Years?

Museum responses indicate a trend toward increased educational programming for K–12 school audiences in the last five years. Seventy percent or more of museums report an increase in numbers of students, teachers and schools served.

Looking to the Future

The results of this survey have helped to launch a heightened understanding of the significant impact of museums and schools working together to educate new generations of citizens. The systematic collection of information allows museums to make informed decisions about their own operations and resource allocation. It can also provide useful tools for school organizations, parents, community leaders, policy makers and potential funders. IMLS recognizes the value of conducting a similar survey among

school professionals in order to provide a more complete understanding of the interactions that lead to successful museum-school partnerships. Such a study would provide useful comparisons to the impressions that museum staffs report as to how and why a school decides to include museum educational programs in its educational tactics.

In addition, IMLS will continue to measure museums' contributions to the education of K–12 students and encourage museums to more closely track, record and communicate the significant work they do with schools. The success of future investigations rests with the willingness and ability of museums to provide the data. As museums seek to establish their value to their communities, they need to document their impact in quantifiable ways. To more fully document their educational impact on school children, museums need to examine the kind of data they collect and the collection methods they use.

What Are the Next Steps for Museums?

Museum educators can take the first steps toward documenting their own contributions to schools and toward the success of a future study by beginning immediately to collect essential data on a regular and systematic basis. Our follow-up study will seek comparable data to measure change over time. Equally important, gathering such information will assist each individual museum in developing strategies for planning, funding, marketing and assessing its educational activities for grades K–12.

Museums should devise useful methods for tracking the following:

✓ Number and type of staff and volunteers who deliver programs

✓ Number and type of programs offered to schools

✓ Individual schools and grade levels served

✓ Number of students served annually/number of teaching hours accumulated

✓ Range and type of teacher services

✓ Number of teachers using teacher services

✓ Processes used to develop programs

✓ Amount and type of resources used in the development and delivery of the educational activities

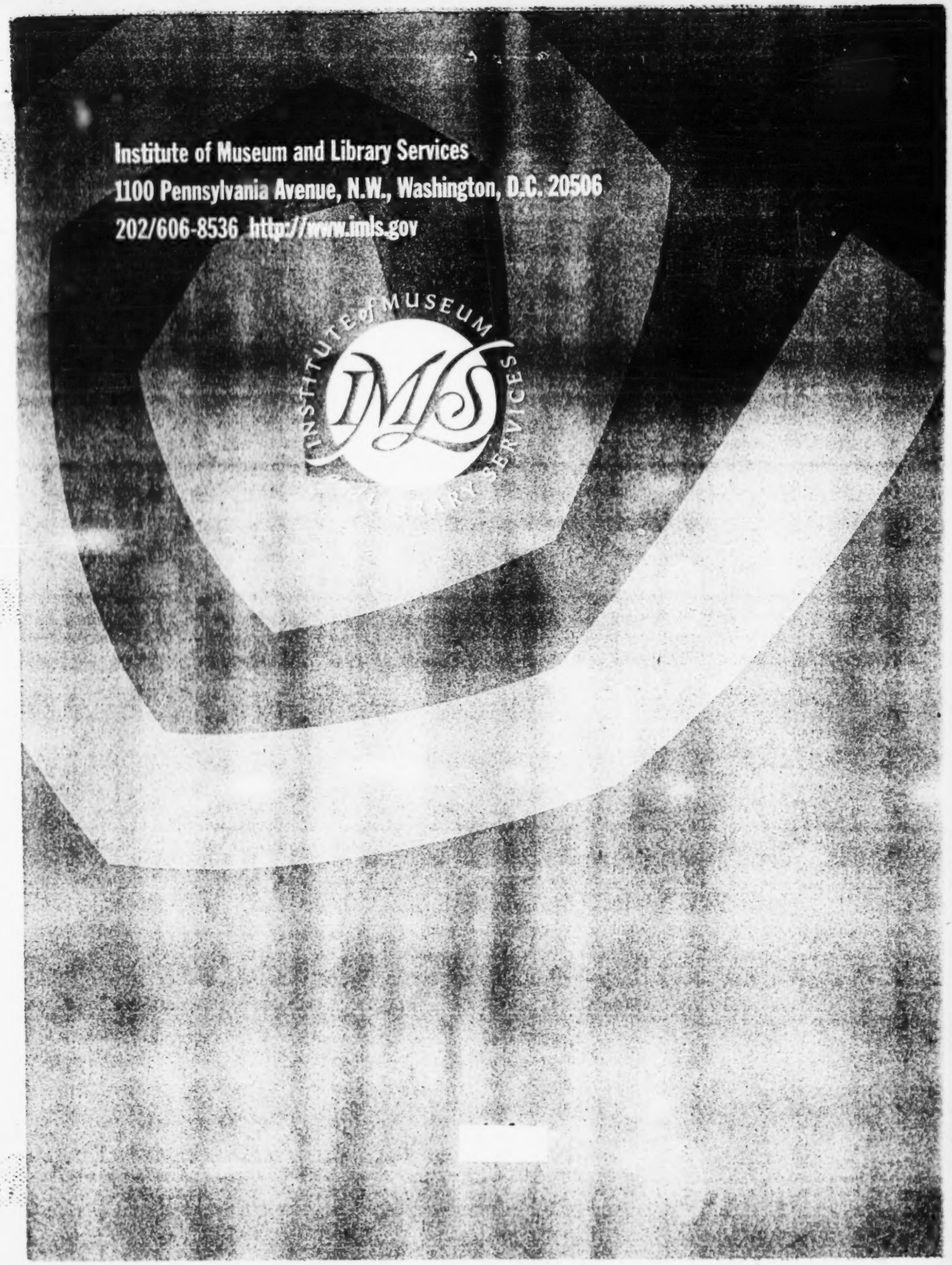
This first report provides museum educators with a useful tool for sharing the extent and impact of their work. For those with successful programs, it provides a powerful acknowledgment of the perceived value of museum education and should be shared with museum boards and administrative staff. It is an excellent report to present to school boards and administrators as well and could become the basis for a community-based survey that documents the local power of museum/school partnerships. It provides an excellent argument to promote new programs and offers a comprehensive guide to the variety of museum education components already successfully employed across the country.

Methodology in Brief

A random sample of 600 was drawn from the IMLS institutional database of 11,700. Museums reported on activity for 1995. The final response rate was 75%, within the normal range of mail-back survey where there is a follow-up. A copy of the full report is available by writing: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20506, calling 202/606-8536; or by email at: imlsinfo@imls.gov

Acknowledgments

The cooperative agreement was administered by Penny Cole, Director of Development and Marketing, Arnot Art Museum. Charlie Jacobson, Department of Mathematics, Elmira College and his students Peter Barrett, Kerry Fleming, Amy Klossner, and Rebecca Leone managed data entry and analysis. For IMLS, Beth Ann Schmitt, Diane Frankel, Hilary Hoopes and Rebecca Danvers contributed to the project. These museum professionals provided valuable suggestions for the questionnaire: Ann Bay, Smithsonian Institution; Mary Ellen Munley, New York State Museum; Dr. Carol Stapp, George Washington University; Dr. Alan Rossman, Chicago Botanic Garden; Molly Fifield Murray, University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum; Lial Jones, Delaware Art Museum.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